The following Listing of the Claims will replace all prior versions and all prior listings of the claims in the present application:

Listing of The Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An antisense nucleic acid molecule comprising a first region and a second region, both of which are complementary to a target nucleic acid molecule, wherein said first region is between 7 and 10 nucleotides in lengthis available for hybridisation but is of insufficient length to form a stable hybrid with said target nucleic acid molecule, and said second region is temporarily masked.

2. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein the second region is temporarily masked through being comprised in a hairpin loop structure.

3. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the first region is complementary to a specific sequence of the target nucleic acid molecule.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein the first region exists in a single-stranded form.

6. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein the second region is complementary to a sequence of the target nucleic acid contiguous with the specific sequence complementary to the first region.

7. (Currently Amended) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein said second region is unmasked in the presence of said target nucleic acid molecule and said unmasked second region thermodynamically favours the formation of a hybrid with said target nucleic acid than when it is maskedbecomes energetically favourable after interaction with said first region.

8. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 2, wherein the hairpin loop comprising the second region contains one or more destabilising elements.

9. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein the second region is no longer than 100 bases in length.

10. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, which is RNA or DNA.

11. (Original) The antisense molecule according to claim 1, wherein the target nucleic acid is RNA or DNA.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for hybridising an antisense nucleic acid molecule to a target nucleic acid, comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing an antisense nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1; and

(b) hybridising the antisense molecule of step (a) to the target nucleic acid such that the first region of the antisense molecule binds to its complementary sequence in the target nucleic acid, such that the second region of the antisense molecule hybridises to its complementary sequence in the target nucleic acid.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for modulating the expression of a gene product encoded by a target nucleic acid, comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing an antisense nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1; and

(b) hybridising the antisense molecule of step (a) to the target nucleic acid comprising a gene encoding said gene product such that the first region of the antisense molecule binds to its complementary sequence in the target nucleic acid, such that the second region of the antisense molecule hybridises to its complementary sequence in the target nucleic acid. Wherein said hybridising of said antisense molecule to said target nucleic acid permits modulation of expression of gene.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 12 or claim 13, wherein the second region of the antisense nucleic acid molecule is temporarily masked in a hairpin loop structure.

15. (Previously Presented) The antisense nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said first region is complementary to a first sequence present in both said target nucleic acid molecule and a non-target nucleic acid molecule and is available for hybridisation but is of insufficient length to form a stable hybrid with said target molecule, and wherein said second region is complementary to a second sequence contiguous or closely juxtaposed with said first sequence in said target nucleic acid molecule but not in said non-target nucleic acid molecule.

16. (Previously Presented) The antisense molecule of claim 1, wherein binding of said first and second regions to the target nucleic acid molecule is required to form a stable hybrid between said antisense molecule and said target nucleic acid molecule.

17. (Previously Presented) The antisense molecule of claim 16, wherein binding of said first and second regions to contiguous sequences in the target nucleic acid molecules is required to form a stable hybrid between said antisense molecule and said target nucleic acid molecule.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of hybridising an antisense nucleic acid molecule to a target nucleic acid, comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing an antisense nucleic acid molecule of claim 1; and

(b) contacting said target nucleic acid ~~and non-target nucleic acids~~ with said antisense molecule such that said first region of said antisense molecule binds to its complementary sequence in said target nucleic acid ~~or non-target nucleic acid~~, and ~~such that~~ said second region of said antisense molecule ~~hybridises~~ binds to its complementary sequence in said target nucleic acid~~, but does not hybridise to the non-target nucleic acid~~.